

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SS-15

NSC-10 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01 USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2356

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR UR

SUBJ: PROTEST OF DETENTION OF AP CORRESPONDENT

REF: A) STATE 190108 ; B) MOSCOW 11546

1. NOTE ON LEDDINGTON CASE (REF B) DELIVERED BY POL
COUNSELOR MORNING SEPT 25 TO BUBNOV, CHIEF BILATERAL SECTION
USA DIVISION MFA.

2. BUBNOV WAS PRIMED TO OFFER SOVIET VERSION OF INCIDENT
AND DID SO ORALLY, WITHOUT NOTES, AS FOLLOWS:

A. LEDDINGTON WAS PARTICIPANT IN UGLY, HOSTILE
OPERATION WHICH WAS AGREED IN ADVANCE WITH THE SOVIET
CITIZEN INVOLVED AND THUS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DELIBERATE
PROVOCATION.

B. WHEN A MILITIAMAN APPREHENDED THE SOVIET CITIZEN
AT THE CC BUILDING , LEDDINGTON RAN ACROSS THE STREET,
CAUSING DISRUPTION OF TRAFFIC, AND JUMPED A FENCE. SEEING
THIS UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR, A MILITIAMAN APPREHENDED HIM AS WELL.

C. HE GAVE UP HIS FILM VOLUNTARILY. HIS CAMERA WAS
DAMAGED WHEN IT ACCIDENTALLY FELL TO THE PAVEMENT.

D. THUS LEDDINGTON'S BEHAVOIR DOES NOT ACCORD WITH
HIS STATUS AS CORRESPONDENT. HE PARTICIPATED IN PLANNED,
PROVOCATIVE ESCAPEDE, VIOLATED TRAFFIC RULES AND ENDANGERED

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SAFETY, WAS APPREHENDED AS A RESULT OF HIS UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR

AND WAS DETAINED A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

E. THEREFORE MFA CANNOT ACCEPT EMBASSY'S VERSION OF THE INCIDENT, WHICH PUTS IT IN AN INCORRECT LIGHT, AND EXPECTS EMBASSY TO TAKE MEASURES TO SEE THAT CORRESPONDENTS BEHAVE APPROPRIATELY.

3. POL COUNSELOR ASKED FOR MORE PRECISE STATEMENT OF ANY RULES OF BEHAVIOR WHICH SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED TO CORRESPONDENTS AND WHICH WOULD APPLY TO LEDDINGTON CASE. BUBNOV SIMPLY REPEATED THAT LEDDINGTON HAS FOR HOSTILE AND PROVOCATIVE PURPOSES PLANNED AN OPERATION WITH A SOVIET CITIZEN, AND DECLINED TO BE MORE SPECIFIC. HE ADDED THAT SOVIET SIDE IS ATTEMPTING TO IMPROVE WORKING CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS, AND EXPECTS THAT JOURNALISTS WILL IN RETURN BEHAVE PROPERLY.

4. POL COUNSELOR REITERATED POINTS MADE IN NOTE, PARTICULARLY POINT THAT, CONTRARY TO MFA'S INFORMATION, FILM WAS TAKEN FROM LEDDINGTON FORCIBLY, AND ADDED THAT, UNFORTUNATELY FOR OUR COMMON INTEREST

IN IMPROVING RELATIONS, ACTIONS OF SOVIET AUTHORITIES SIMPLY INSURED THAT THE STORY WOULD RECEIVE MORE ATTENTION IN THE U.S. AND WOULD REFLECT MORE ADVERSELY ON THE SOVIET IMAGE THERE. HE SUGGESTED THAT BUBNOV HAS WORKED IN THE U.S. LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT EMBASSY CANNOT SUCCESSFULLY TELL JOURNALISTS HOW TO DO THEIR WORK. HE ALSO NOTED THAT ORIGINALLY EMBASSY HAD INTENDED FOR EMBASSY PRESS OFFICER TO BRING MATTER UP WITH PRESSECTION OF MFA, BUT PRESS SECTION HAD REFUSED TO GIVE HIM APPOINTMENT.

5. ON LATTER POINT, BUBNOV COMMENTED THAT APPROACH TO PRESS SECTION WOULD HAVE BEEN MOST APPROPRIATE AND THAT IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT APPOINTMENT COULD NOT BE ARRANGED, HE UNDERSTOOD THAT ALL RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS IN THAT SECTION HAD IN FACT BEEN UNAVAILABLE THE AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 24.
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